

ASSESSMENT OF NUTRITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, FOOD CONSUMPTION AND PERSONAL HYGIENE OF ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

Good nutritional knowledge, eating the right foods and personal hygiene among adolescent is an important determinant of health outcomes. Since adolescents are the future of the nation, so their health and nutritional awareness are of utmost importance for the wellbeing of society. The study was carried out to assess the adolescent's nutritional knowledge, food consumption and personal hygiene aspects in the District of Lakhimpur of Assam state. Data were collected from 200 adolescents attending two Private schools and two Government schools using a self administered questionnaire. It has been seen that 55.33% of adolescents had a lower level of nutritional knowledge in basic nutrients, food groups, and balanced diet, types of food such as energy yielding food, protective food, bodybuilding food, fiber diet, complete food, and sources of nutrients. 79% of adolescents consumed unhealthy food like Chocolate/ice cream/bakery product/chips/cold drinks which can lead to increase risks of nutritional deficiency diseases, malnutrition and other different lifelong complications. So there is a great need to make adolescents nutritionally sound and implement different nutritional intervention programme so that these motivate them for the smart nutrition, food choices and changes their consumption behavior for achieving a better human life.

KEYWORDS: Adolescent, Nutrition, Awareness, consumption & Personal hygiene

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INTRODUCTION

The period of childhood ends as soon as puberty begins, which is the beginning of adolescence. Adolescence is a significant period of development as it starts with the beginning of puberty-the developmental period when children attain sexual maturity and reproductive capacity. During adolescence, many revolutionary changes take place especially in the aspects of physical, mental and emotional maturity. World Health Organization (WHO) defines this period as a crucial stage which ranges from the age of 10-19 years. This is the period between childhood and adulthood and it is known as the period of preparation for complete human being. That is why we can say that an adolescent is the future generation of a country.

Our country has the highest population of adolescents. Every fifth person of population in India is in between 10-19 years. So their health and nutritional status is of utmost importance to keep them healthy and wealthy. The eating behaviour of adolescent makes a great impact on general health status throughout life.⁽⁴⁾ The available evidence from 14 developing countries suggests that adolescent run a greater risk of nutritional difficulties. For them, obesity is a serious and growing concern in both industrialized countries and the developing world⁽⁶⁾. Food consumption patterns always associated with overweight, underweight and different lifelong complications. These complications may develop fatigue, heart diseases and different physical and psychological symptoms.⁽⁷⁾ Thus nutritional knowledge and food consumption pattern has become a major concern for researcher.

There is a relationship between nutritional knowledge and dietary habit pattern. Nutritional awareness, healthy eating habits and personal hygiene not only provides potential in health and nutritional aspects but also helps in the growth and development of adolescents in all phases. A systematic approach will help to determine the implementation of intervention programme and provide a greater benefit to improve food habits in both home and school environment. Therefore the study was carried out to assess the nutritional knowledge and food consumption pattern as well as personal hygiene of adolescents attending schools in Lakhimpur district of Assam.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess the knowledge of nutrition among adolescent
- To assess the food consumption pattern of adolescent
- To know the personal hygiene of adolescent.

METHODOLOGY

The study was related to nutritional knowledge, food consumption and personal hygiene of adolescents (age group between 13-18 years) residing in the Lakhimpur district of Assam state. The two private schools and two government schools were selected for the study keeping in view of constraints time and convenience. The total sample consists of two hundred adolescents studied in these schools. The sample was randomly selected from the class VIII, IX and X. Questionnaires were distributed to the respondents for collecting data. The questionnaire included questions into five different sections. In the first section- awareness about nutrition which consists of knowledge about nutritional term, knowledge about nutrients, food groups, balanced diet. The second section consists of awareness about different types of food, functions of food. 3rd section consists of awareness about the source of nutrients. In the 4th section, the respondents were asked to recall the food items they consumed in the last 24 hours of the day. The personal hygiene variables such as brushing of teeth, washing hand before eating, washing hand after defecation, and daily bath etc. were included in the 5th section of the structured questionnaire. The collected data was tabulated and analyzed in the form of frequencies and percentage etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Nutritional Knowledge Assessment

Basic nutritional knowledge is more important for healthy eating habit. The following figure shows the awareness about nutritional knowledge of adolescents of school going children.

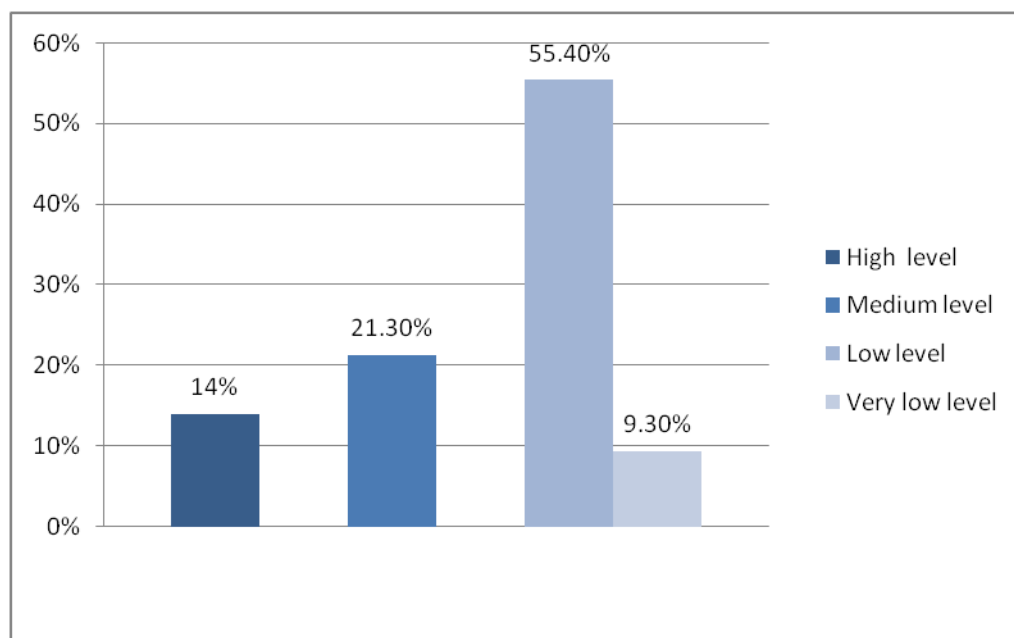


Figure 1: Nutritional Knowledge of Adolescents

From the above figure, it has been seen that half of the majority of respondents (55.33%) have a low level of nutritional knowledge, 21.3% of respondents having a medium level of nutritional knowledge, 9.3% of respondents had a very low level of nutritional knowledge. The awareness of nutritional aspects was high among only 14% of respondents. Since a very small percentage of respondents were aware of food or nutrients. So it is recommended that nutrition education should be given to adolescents to remove ignorance about various nutrients, their functions, sources, balanced diet and so on. Further, it has been seen that if we compare between private school students and government school students, most of the students from government schools were found a low level of nutritional knowledge which needs to be strengthened.

Food Consumption Pattern of Adolescents

The investigator assessed the food consumption and food preference of school going adolescent. To know the food consumption pattern, the respondents were given a food chart following various food items that they consumed during the previous day. The respondents were recalled and responded to the food item accordingly. The following table shows the food consumption and food preferences in the last 24 hours among respondents.

Table 1: Food Consumption of Adolescents (in the last 24 hours)

Sl. No	Food Item	Frequency	Percentage
1	Cereals (Rice, Chapati)	178	89%.
2	Pulses (Dal,)	162	81%
3	Milk and Milk Product	99	49.5%
4	Green leafy Vegetable	78	39%
5	Fruit and Fruit juice	102	51%
6	Chocolate/icecream/bakery product/chips/cold drinks	158	79%
7	Egg/ Meat/Fish	164	82%

The above table shows that 89% of respondents consumed rice and chapatti whereas nearly 82% of respondents

consumed pulses and egg/meat/ fish along with rice and chapatti. Nearly 50% of them consumed milk and milk product, fruits and fruit juice. 79% of respondents consumed chocolates/ice cream/ bakery product/ potato chips/cold drinks. Usually, these types of food are considered junk food which provides calories with little nutritive value. It has been seen that only 39% of respondents consumed green leafy vegetables in the last 24 hours. It is very important for encouraging to consuming green leafy vegetables daily among adolescents. Because leafy vegetables are rich sources of iron, carotene, vitamin C and calcium. These vegetables also provide cellulose and roughage that reduced nutritional deficiency disorder among adolescents.

Personal hygiene variable among Adolescents

Keeping clean is an important part of staying healthy. The investigator assessed the personal hygiene of adolescents which is one of the most important factors of health related disease. The variables such as brushing of teeth, washing hand before eating, washing hand after defecation, and daily bath etc. were included in the structured questionnaire. The following table shows the personal hygiene of sample respondents.

Table 2: Personal Hygiene Variable among Adolescents

Personal hygiene variable	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total
Brush teeth ≥ 2 times per day	69 (34.5%)	131 (65.5%)	200
Wash hand before eating	177 (88.5%)	23 (11.5%)	200
Wash hand with soap and water after defecation	106 (53%)	94(47%)	200
Daily bathing	189 (94.5%)	11(5.5%)	200

The above table shows that only 34.5% of respondents brush their teeth two times per day. 88.5% of adolescents washed their hand before eating, 47% of respondents do not wash their hands with soaps after defecation and 94.5% of adolescents take bath regularly.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study showed that a large number of adolescent consumed junk foods like chocolates, soft drinks, bakery item. This is an area of concern. Although daily consumption of green leafy vegetables is of utmost importance for an adolescent to keep them healthy, it was found that less than half of adolescents consumed no serving of green leafy vegetables in the last 24 hours.

In order to promote good dietary behaviors, it is recommended to implement a nutrition intervention programme which provides food or nutrient supplement and nutrition education to this section of the population. Just imparting knowledge is not enough; adolescents should be motivated to practice the knowledge in their day to day life. Thus developing nutritional interventions, adoption of educational strategy among adolescents for healthy eating habit is inevitable to make every adolescent more active, more energetic and contribute as healthy human beings in society.

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